

**CHAIR'S REPORT**  
**OF THE**  
**SPRING WORKSHOP OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**SPECIES WORKING GROUPS**

*Hilton Hotel Silver Spring*  
*Silver Spring, MD*

APRIL 30 – MAY 1, 2003

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**John E. Graves, Ph.D.**  
**Advisory Committee Chairman**

*Drafted by*  
Erika Carlsen and  
Kim Blankenbeker  
Office of Sustainable Fisheries  
National Marine Fisheries Service

## **CHAIR'S REPORT OF THE SPRING WORKSHOP OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE SPECIES WORKING GROUPS**

*Silver Spring, MD  
April 30 – May 1, 2003*

**Summary:** The Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) convened its spring Species Working Group (SWG) meeting on April 30 – May 1, 2003, at the Hilton Hotel in Silver Spring, Maryland. The four Species Working Groups (Swordfish, Bluefin Tuna, Billfish, and BAYS or Bigeye, Albacore, Yellowfin, and Skipjack Tunas) are composed of Advisory Committee members and Technical Advisors, as appointed by the U.S. Commissioners to ICCAT.

On April 30, the Committee discussed the 2002 ICCAT meeting results, U.S. implementation of ICCAT recommendations, 2003 SCRS research activities, and NMFS research and monitoring activities. The Committee also received and update on Commission activities and discussed administrative business. Among other things, the Committee established October 26-28, 2003, as the date for its fall meeting and established a steering committee to assist in organizing events for the 2004 ICCAT meeting, which will be held in the United States.

The Advisory Committee met in closed session on the afternoon of April 30 to discuss the upcoming ICCAT intersessional meetings on compliance and monitoring and on trade, to exchange views on the functioning of ICCAT, and to receive updates on recent U.S. meetings with other ICCAT members. The consultation regarding identification of countries that diminish the effectiveness of ICCAT was also held. Later in the afternoon, the Committee and its Technical Advisors broke into SWGs for detailed discussions. The purpose of the Working Group meetings was to identify management and research priorities that the Advisory Committee might wish to recommend to the U.S. Commissioners. Each SWG was asked to consider previous SWG recommendations, the status of the stocks, the effectiveness of current international conservation and management measures, research and data needs, compliance issues, and any other matters relating to U.S. goals for and responsibilities under ICCAT. The SWGs met again on May 1 to finalize their recommendations. The Convener of each SWG presented the results of the working group discussions to the Committee in open session for consideration. The Committee adopted the four SWG reports.

The agenda for the meeting is attached as Appendix 1. The list of participants is included as Appendix 2. The list of materials distributed to the Committee is included as Appendix 3. The final reports of the SWGs are contained in Attachments 1 through 4 (i.e., billfish, BAYS tunas, swordfish, and bluefin tuna, respectively).

## **I. Opening of the Meeting**

*A. Welcome and Introductions:* Advisory Committee Chairman John Graves opened the meeting on April 30, 2003. He welcomed all Committee members, offering a special welcome to new Committee members and technical advisors. A participant list is attached as *Appendix 2*.

Dr. Graves reviewed the process and goals for the meeting, noting the need to develop specific research and management recommendations for the Commissioners. He noted that issues could sometimes be contentious and stressed the need for members to respect the process and each other. Dr. William Hogarth, Federal Government Commissioner to ICCAT, also welcomed the Committee and noted the important role the Committee plays in developing U.S. positions for ICCAT. He pointed out that all three commissioners were in attendance and were looking forward to productive discussions. He also reported that the United States would be hosting the 2004 ICCAT meeting, most likely in New Orleans.

*B. Adoption of the Agenda:* The Committee adopted its agenda without amendment but expressed a desire to complete its agenda as quickly as possible. The agenda is attached as Appendix 1.

*C. Security Briefing:* Deirdre Warner-Kramer of the Department of State reviewed the confidentiality requirements associated with being a member of the Advisory Committee and of participating on the U.S. Delegation to ICCAT. In particular, she noted that closed session discussions by the Committee and internal delegation discussions could not be divulged without express consent by an authorized government official. She also noted that only government employees could negotiate with foreign governments and take decisions that would bind the U.S. Government.

*D. Appointment of Planning and Review Subcommittee:*

The Chair appointed the following members to the P/R Subcommittee:

Ray Bogan – Recreational interests  
Rich Ruais – Commercial interests  
Liz Lauck – Environmental interests  
John Dean – Fishery Management Council

The purpose of this group is to provide advice to the Chair on issues of interest or concern to the Committee that may arise during periods between Committee meetings and for which the Chair needs immediate feedback.

*E. Appointment of SWG Conveners/Rapporteurs*

The Chair appointed a convener and a rapporteur for each SWG. Viridin C. Brown was appointed as the BAYS Working Group convener and Kim Blankenkaker was appointed rapporteur. Gail Johnson was appointed as the Swordfish Working Group convener and Rick Pearson was appointed rapporteur. David Secor was appointed as the Bluefin Tuna Working Group convener

and Erika Carlsen was appointed rapporteur. Maumus Claverie served as interim convener of the Billfish Working Group and Dave Kerstetter served as rapporteur.

## **II. 2002 ICCAT Meeting Results**

The Chair gave a presentation highlighting the accomplishments of the 2002 ICCAT meeting. Overhead slides from this presentation are available from the Committee's Executive Secretary upon request.

## **III. U.S. Implementation of ICCAT Decisions**

Dr. Christopher Rogers, Chief of the NMFS Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Management Division, reported on the extensive number of rulemakings facing the agency. A copy of his handout is available from the Committee's Executive Secretary. Some Committee members commented on the importance of implementing the positive vessel list expeditiously and in conjunction with other countries so that IUU product would not be redirected to the U.S. market. Dr. Rogers noted limitations in the positive vessel list program. Specifically, he pointed out that the program only covers large scale vessels and that, as of now, the United States has no real-time way to identify if product is coming from a vessel on the authorized list or not. Possible expansion of the vessel list beyond large scale vessels was discussed.

## **IV. 2003 SCRS Research Activities and U.S. Participation**

Dr. Jerry Scott of the NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) gave a presentation on the schedule of ICCAT scientific meetings for 2002. Copies of this presentation were distributed to the Committee and are available from the Committee's Executive Secretary upon request.

Dr. Scott reminded everyone that SCRS meetings are open to scientists only if they are invited by the working group or if they are presenting a scientific paper at the meeting. He reviewed the process for contributing scientific papers to the SCRS through the U.S. Delegation, noting that titles and summaries are due about a month before a particular meeting and that a draft of the paper is due to the SEFSC no later than two weeks before the meeting unless prior arrangements have been made. He noted that a detailed description of this process had been circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting.

With respect to the meeting on billfish in Shimizu, Japan, it was noted that there was no obvious way to know how to incorporate habitat information into assessment methodologies. Dr. Scott noted that it might be many years, perhaps beyond 2005, before data can be standardized and better science can be produced.

With regard to the bluefin tuna working group meeting on integrated management measures, it was noted that this was intended to be a joint meeting of managers and scientists. Dr. Scott noted that scientists will provide simulations and a research proposal, which will require increased funding to adequately address management questions. He noted that critical issues differ for the east than the west. The need for development of an operational model was

discussed. Dr. Scott suggested that it could be at least another year before better scientific advice on integrated management could be developed. A Committee member stressed his interest in moving beyond research at the bluefin tuna working group meeting. Dr. Scott responded that research planning was the desire of several countries and that the United States would be identifying operational options. He noted the need to test options to determine their robustness, which will require simulation work. He stressed that all this work could probably not be completed before November 2003. The Committee noted that the bluefin tuna working group might need to meet more than once and noted that a one day meeting was not acceptable. A question was raised about the utility of time/area closures for management, and Dr. Scott noted that the issue was being investigated but would likely not be ripe for discussion until the next assessment.

With respect to yellowfin tuna, Dr. Scott noted that there were ongoing efforts to work with Brazil, Venezuela, and others to improve data collection. In discussions of Ghana, Dr. Scott stated that control of that fishery may be improving. The Committee discussed improvements in U.S. yellowfin data collection. The work by Loftus and Stone was recognized and Dr. Scott noted that this information could be used in the upcoming assessment if it were deemed to be robust.

#### **V. NMFS Research and Monitoring Activities**

Dr. Rogers noted that a document had been produced in response to a request by the Committee on various research and monitoring activities taking place within and outside NMFS. Dr. Rogers briefly introduced this document (available from the Committee's Executive Secretary). In the interests of time, the Committee agreed that in depth discussion of the document should occur in each SWG.

Andy Loftus and Dick Stone provided an update to the Committee on their work regarding BAYS data. A copy of their presentation (Evaluating Potential Bias in the Large Pelagic Survey for the BAYS Atlantic Tuna Fishery) is available from the Committee's Executive Secretary.

#### **VI. Commission Update**

Kim Blankenbeker (International Fisheries Division, NMFS Office of Sustainable Fisheries) provided an update to the Committee on Commission membership, pending ICCAT administrative business, the status of the 2002 proposed resolution on sea turtles, and extra-budgetary funding issues.

*New Members:* After the 2002 ICCAT meeting, Vanuatu, Iceland, and Cyprus joined the Commission. Other countries likely to join ICCAT before the 2003 meeting included: Turkey, Malta, and Norway.

*Administrative Business:* ICCAT will be appointing a new Executive Secretary this fall and Joe Powers submitted his application. The results of the first round of voting will be available during the first week of September. In other administrative business, elections of the Chairmen

of the Commission and all subcommittees will be held this fall. The only person not eligible for re-election is the STACFAD chairman, Jim Jones (Canada).

*Turtles:* Due to difficulties in agreeing changes to the 2002 US proposal on turtles intersessionally, the United States wrote to ICCAT and proposed that the parties work out their differences prior to the 2003 meeting and asked that the issue be taken up as a matter of priority in the first plenary session. We expect the revised resolution to be adopted at that time.

*Extra-budgetary Funding:* To facilitate implementation of the vessel list programs by the Secretariat and to help support the convening of two intersessional meetings of interest to the United States (data workshop and bluefin tuna working group meeting), the United States is transferring \$32,000 to ICCAT. In addition, the United States is providing, through ICCAT, \$16,000 to Ghana to help support 100 percent observer coverage in its FAD fishery for 2003-04.

## VII. **Advisory Committee Business**

The Advisory Committee considered the following operational issues:

*a. Funding/Budget:* The Chair presented the Committee's budget. The Committee is currently in good shape financially. A copy of the budget is available from the Committee Chairman.

*b. Date of Fall Meeting:* The Chair proposed that the Committee schedule its fall meeting on October 26-28, 2003, (Sunday through Tuesday). The Committee agreed with the Chair's suggestions.

*c. Regional Meetings:* The Chair suggested that the number of regional meetings be limited to no more than three this year due to the limited assessment activity of the SCRS. The Committee discussed the following as possible meeting dates/locations: Portland, ME (15 or 17 July); St. Thomas, USVI (14 August); and Kill Devil Hills or Morehead City (7 October). Dates and locations for the regional meetings will be finalized over the summer in time to advertise the meetings adequately; however, The Chairman emphasized that each Committee member had a responsibility to ensure that all interested members of the public are aware of these meetings. Each Committee member would be funded to attend one regional meeting.

*d. Summer Workshop:* The Committee decided not to convene a summer workshop in 2003. A special session during the fall meeting to discuss bluefin tuna workshop issues was discussed.

*e. ICCAT 2004 Steering Committee:* Recognizing the need find funding sources to support receptions at the U.S. hosted 2004 ICCAT meeting in order to help ensure a top flight meeting, the Committee suggested a steering committee be formed. John Graves will lead this Committee. Other members include Glenn Delaney (commercial interests); Bob Hayes (recreational interests); Liz Lauck (environmental interests); and Mau Claverie (fishery management council representative). Bill Hogarth reported that at least \$200,000 was available

in the budget to support the 2004 ICCAT meeting.

*f. Other Issues:* No other issues were discussed.

#### **VIII. Other Open Session Business**

No other open session business was discussed.

#### **IX. Post ICCAT 2002**

A. Conduct of Commission Meeting: It was noted that much work was done outside of the formal ICCAT sessions in 2002, particularly relative to species discussions. This led too a number of parties being left out of discussions. Also, there was a significant amount of down time for delegation members. The PWG and Compliance Committee's did meet in formal session more frequently. In fact, some felt the work of these two bodies has become to time-consuming and it was suggested that, for the PWG, a way be found to reduce debate and move to decision more quickly regarding trade action. A limitation, however, in speeding this work is the need for due process. It was suggested that the intersessional trade work planned for May might result in processes that speed the work of the PWG. The fact that countries are joining ICCAT to avoid sanctions and to obtain quota was discussed and it was suggested that ICCAT should develop longer term management measures. With respect to this idea, however, it was noted that parties will continue to fish outside ICCAT is some accommodation is not made. It was suggested that we need to rebuild fisheries to provide more fishing opportunities for newcomers.

B. Bilateral Contacts: Dr. Hogarth reported on his talks with the EC concerning compliance issues and, in particular, implementation of the 2002 ICCAT decisions. He reminded the Committee of the 301 petition and of the pending Pelly request. He also noted that he had met with Japan this spring. Additional contacts with the EC and other ICCAT members were planned for 2003.

C. Working Group Meeting on Trade: Deirdre Warner-Kramer (Department of State) provided a quick summary of U.S. expectations for the May Trade Working Group meeting. She explained that the proposal from the 2002 ICCAT meeting to streamline ICCAT trade related instruments was not adopted and that the proposal would be revised in Madeira with the expectation that it be adopted at the start of the 2003 ICCAT meeting.

D. Working Group on Compliance and Monitoring: Kim Blankenbeker explained the background regarding the monitoring working group and noted that there were differing views on what the focus of the upcoming meeting should be. From the U.S. perspective, the comprehensive monitoring and control document developed by the EC was too ambitious and difficult to negotiate; however, it could be helpful as a background document. Issues that seemed to be of primary concern for some or all parties included VMS and high seas boarding and inspection. A request was made the Committee consider the various monitoring and control issues facing the Commission and provide advice on them as appropriate.

## **X. Consultation Regarding Identification of Countries**

Jack Dunnigan (Director, NMFS Office of Sustainable Fisheries) reported that the review of countries under ATCA was underway and that the results of this review would be reported at the fall Committee meeting. Kim Blankenbeker recalled the trade related decisions taken by ICCAT in 2002.

## **XI and XII. Species Working Group Meetings**

On the afternoon of Wednesday, April 30, each of the SWGs met separately in closed session to develop research and management recommendations for consideration by the Advisory Committee as a whole. On the morning on Thursday, May 1, the SWGs met again in closed sessions to finalize the recommendations to be made to the full Advisory Committee. These recommendations will be transmitted to the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries and the U.S. Commissioners to ICCAT. The final reports of these Working Groups are attached. Attachment 1 is the Billfish Working Group Report. Attachment 2 is the BAYS Tunas Working Group Report. Attachment 3 is the Swordfish Working Group Report. Attachment 4 is the Bluefin Tuna Working Group Report.

## **XII. Preliminary Reports of the Species Working Group Discussions**

The conveners of each Species Working Group presented to the full Advisory Committee the preliminary recommendations of their groups. The final versions of these reports, the recommendations of which were adopted by the full Committee, are attached as noted above.

*BAYS Tunas (and other species):* Viridin Brown presented the recommendations of the BAYS working group. The report was adopted without amendment. Concern was expressed about the lack of compliance by Ghana relative to the Gulf of Guinea closure and the threat by the EC that they would stop abiding by the closure if this situation did not improve. An advisor noted that BAYS fisheries are an important for subsistence purposes in the USVI and that the distinction between commercial and recreational harvests is blurred. That is, all fish harvested are consumed. It was recognized that NMFS needs to increase its presence in the Caribbean. A question was raised about the possibility that quotas will be need to be developed for BAYS stocks this year. Dr. Scott noted that yellowfin and albacore tunas would be assessed this year and that bigeye tuna had been assessed in 2002. For the bigeye tuna fishery, catches need to be reduced and current management measures, which run out in 2003, put catch limits on the fishery. For yellowfin and albacore tunas, it remains to be seen what the assessments show. A Committee member stressed that U.S. for the BAYS fisheries are significantly underestimated and negotiating hard quotas based on those data would be a mistake. The Committee noted its interest in moving the results of the Loftus/Stone study into the ICCAT arena, although they recognized a significant amount of work would need to be completed to accomplish this. Dr. Hogarth noted that a part of improving data collection might be development of a recreational fishing license. He also noted that increased cooperation with the States, including providing funds, might be an option for improving data collection.



*Billfish:* Maumus Claverie presented the results of the Billfish Working Group meeting. The report was adopted by the Committee. Some Committee members suggested that NMFS needed to improve its outreach regarding billfish issues, such as by having a more interactive website. Another suggested that access to data should be improved. The use of time/area closures for conserving and managing billfish was discussed and it was suggested a longer term strategy should be developed. Working with the EC and other countries in this regard was suggested. One Committee member expressed concern that ICCAT members are not open to the use of time/area closures and stressed the need to acquire additional data (time/depth recorder, hooking information) as soon as possible. It was pointed out that improving data collection was required under the marlin rebuilding plan and that better data would be critical for both the next marlin assessment and the domestic ESA status review.

*Swordfish:* The Swordfish Working Group recommendations were presented to the full Committee by Gail Johnson. The Committee adopted the report without changes. A Committee member suggested it might be useful to change the requirement for observers from number of sets to number of hooks. Dr. Scott noted that this would not have a significant change on analyses although there would tend to be a higher level of coverage on bigger vessels that use more hooks.

*Bluefin Tuna:* David Secor presented the bluefin tuna working group recommendations. The Committee adopted the report. An advisor noted the need to revisit 8 percent small fish limitation in the rebuilding program for western bluefin tuna. He suggested it could be raised in a way that did not negatively impact rebuilding. Dr. Scott noted that some work had been done on this issue and that additional follow up was needed. A Committee member noted that the 8 percent issue might be more domestic and international in scope. A Committee member requested that the closure of the Gulf of Mexico to pelagic longline fishing should be re-evaluated. He indicated that the closure was not having the intended effect and that it should be replaced with a spawning closure. The Committee supported any efforts by Commissioner Hogarth that would result in improved compliance by the EC.

#### **XIV. Other Business**

A. Production of Final Reports/Presentation to NMFS: Chairman Graves noted his intent to meet with Bill Hogarth as soon as possible to present the Committee's recommendations. He noted that reports should be considered final although small grammatical or other changes might be introduced.

B. Other Matters: A new technical advisor noted the complexities of the process and issues relative to ICCAT and suggested consideration be given to developing a presentation on the basics that could be given to newcomers to the Committee. A Committee member asked the Chair why he sent a letter to NOAA concerning the 2002 meeting to set the U.S. government positions for ICCAT. The Chair explained that the structure of the 2002 position meeting did not allow the views of the Committee to be fully and fairly represented. He felt he had an obligation to the Committee to see that such a situation does not occur in the future. He noted that the response for the NOAA Under Secretary was gracious. He noted that he would ensure

that all relevant information was presented in the future.

**XV. Adjournment**

Chairman Graves expressed his sincere appreciation to government and VIMS personnel for their excellent support of the meeting and quality presentations. He also thanked the Species Working Group conveners and rapporteurs for their hard work. He emphasized that all of these efforts contribute to the productivity and success of Committee meetings. The Committee and Commissioners thanked the Chairman for his excellent leadership.

**Agenda**

**2003 Spring Species Working Groups Meeting of the  
Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section to ICCAT**

**April 30-May 1, 2003**

**Hilton Hotel  
Silver Spring, MD**

**Wednesday, April 30** (*Open to the Public Unless Otherwise Noted*)

John Graves, Advisory Committee Chairman, presiding

9:00    *Registration*

9:30    *I. Opening of the Meeting* (Graves except as noted)

- A. Welcome and Introductions
- B. Adoption of the Agenda
- C. Security Briefing (Warner-Kramer)
- D. Appointment of Planning and Review Subcommittee
- E. Appointment of Conveners/Rapporteurs

9:45    *II. 2002 ICCAT Meeting Results* (Graves)

10:00    *III U.S. Implementation of ICCAT Decisions* (Rogers)

10:30    *IV. 2003 SCRS Research Activities and U.S. Participation* (Scott)

11:00    *V. NMFS Research and Monitoring Activities* (Rogers)

11:30    *VI. Commission Update* (Blankenbeker)

11:45    *VII. Advisory Committee Business* (Graves)

- A. Funding/Budget
- B. Dates of Fall Meeting
- C. Regional Meetings
  - Dates, Location, and Participation
- D. Summer Workshop
- E. ICCAT 2004 Steering Committee
- F. Other Issues

12:15    *VIII. Other Open Session Business*

12:30    Lunch

**Wednesday Afternoon Session (Closed to the Public)**

- 1:45 IX. Post ICCAT 2002
- A. Conduct of Commission Meeting (Hogarth/Graves)
  - B. Bilateral Contacts (Hogarth)
  - C. Working Group Meeting on Trade (Warner-Kramer)
  - D. Working Group Meeting on Monitoring and Control (Blankenbeker)
- 2:30 X. Consultation Regarding ATCA Identification of Countries (Dunnigan)
- 2:45-? XI. Species Working Group Meetings

**Thursday, May 1** (*Open to the Public Unless Otherwise Noted*)

- 8:30 XII. *SWG meetings* (Adoption: report/recommendations) **(Closed to the Public)**
- 10:30 XIII. *Report of SWG Discussions (Conveners)*
- BAYS Tunas
  - Billfish
  - Swordfish
  - Bluefin Tuna
- 1:25 XIV. *Other Business* (Graves)
- A. Production of Final Reports and Presentation to NMFS
  - B. Other Business
- 1:30 *Adjournment*

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

### U.S. Commissioners to ICCAT

Glenn Delaney	Commercial Commissioner
Bill Hogarth	Federal Government Commissioner
Bob Hayes	Recreational Commissioner

### Advisory Committee Members

Shanna Beemer	National Audubon Society
Nelson Beideman	Blue Water Fishermen's Association
Ray Bogan	Bogan and Bogan
Viridin Brown	Caribbean FMC
Maumus Claverie	Gulf of Mexico FMC
Jack Devnew	The Flagship Group
James Donofrio	Recreational Fishing Alliance
Mike Genovese	F/V White Dove Too
John Graves	VA Institute of Marine Science
Gail Johnson	F/V Seneca
Liz Lauck	Wildlife Conservation Society
Bob Lucas	Attorney at law
Ellen Peel	The Billfish Foundation
Bob Pride	Mid-Atlantic FMC
Rich Ruais	East Coast Tuna Association
Randi Parks Thomas	U.S. Tuna Foundation
David Secor	University of Maryland
Peter Weiss	General Category Tuna Association
David Wilmot	Ocean Wildlife Campaign

### *Committee Members not in Attendance:*

<i>David Borden</i>	<i>New England FMC</i>
<i>John Mark Dean</i>	<i>South Atlantic FMC</i>
<i>Willie Etheridge</i>	<i>Etheridge Seafood</i>
<i>Peter Foley</i>	<i>L. Boone</i>
<i>Steve Weiner</i>	
<i>Russell Nelson</i>	<i>Nelson Consulting</i>

### Technical Advisors

Andrew Baler

Pamela Basco	
Eleanor Bochenek	Rutgers University
James Budi	Predator Packouts
Bob Cowen	
Tim Hobbs	Ocean Wildlife Campaign
John Larson	
Bob McAuliffe	McAuliffe Fishing, Inc.
Don Nehls	Lindgren-Pittman, Inc.
Greg Skomal	Mass. Division of Marine Fisheries
Dick Stone	Consultant
Bob Zales II	Panama City Boatmen Association

Technical Advisors not in Attendance

<i>Molly Lutcavage</i>	<i>New England Aquarium</i>
<i>Phil Goodyear</i>	<i>Consultant</i>
<i>Ron Hamlin</i>	
<i>Putnam MacLean</i>	<i>Bright Eye Fishing Corp.</i>
<i>Ernie Panacek</i>	<i>Viking Village, Inc.</i>

Government Personnel

Kim Blankenbeker	NMFS International Fisheries
Erika Carlsen	NMFS International Fisheries
Joe DesFosse	NMFS HMS Division
Jack Dunnigan	NMFS Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Director
Rachel Husted	NMFS International Fisheries
John Johnson	NMFS International Fisheries
Tyson Kade	NMFS HMS Division
Pat Kraniotis	NOAA GC
Mariam McCall	NOAA GCF
Caroline Park	NOAA GCF
Rick Pearson	NMFS HMS Division
Greg Power	NMFS
Christopher Rogers	NMFS HMS Division, Chief
Gerry Scott	NMFS SEFSC
Deirdre Warner-Kramer	Department of State
John Witzig	NMFS
Dorothy Zbicz	Department of State

Other Attendees

Sally Campen	Japan Fisheries Association
David Kerstetter	VIMS
Andrew Loftus	Consultant

### **Handouts**

The following materials were distributed to the Committee during the spring 2003 meeting. Copies of these materials are available from the Committee's Executive Secretariat upon request.

- 1) 2003 Contact List of ICCAT Commissioners, U.S. Advisory Committee Technical Advisors, and Government Personnel
- 2) Agenda
- 3) HMS Research Projects summary
- 4) Presentation by Gerald Scott on SCRS activities and meeting dates
- 5) 2003 Species Working Group Break Out Sessions - Draft Agenda
- 6) ICCAT recommendations and resolutions
- 7) 2002 draft resolution on sea turtles
- 8) 2002 SWG breakout reports
- 9) Loftus/Stone Presentation: Evaluating Potential Bias in the Large Pelagic Survey for the BAYS Atlantic Tunas Fishery
- 10) ICCAT Intersessional Materials (agendas, logistics, previous meeting reports, draft trade streamlining proposal)

**Report of the Bigeye, Albacore, Yellowfin, and Skipjack (BAYS)  
Tunas Working Group**

Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section to ICCAT  
2003 Species Working Group Workshop

Hilton Hotel - Silver Spring  
April 30 - May 1, 2003

*Viridin C. Brown, Convener*  
*Kim Blankenbeker, Rapporteur*

**I. Recommendations for BAYS Tunas**

A. Data

The BAYS Working Group remains convinced that recreational and commercial data in U.S. BAYS fisheries are seriously under-reported. This view was strengthened given the presentation made by Andy Loftus and Dick Stone in which they reported on the preliminary findings of their study entitled Evaluating Potential Bias in the Large Pelagic Survey for the BAYS Atlantic Tuna Fishery. The focus of the study, which was commissioned by the National Marine Fisheries Service in response to continuing Committee concerns, was on recreational yellowfin tuna catches. The Working Group recognizes the effort by NMFS to address its concerns, recommends that the work begun by Loftus and Stone continue and endorses the recommendations made in their preliminary report (appended).

The Working Group also recommends that work to improve BAYS data be expanded to other fisheries and stresses that the effort include a retrospective analysis to reflect an historical context. The need to develop new mechanisms to collect data in all regions throughout the year was highlighted. The special needs of the Caribbean area relative to data collection on BAYS tunas given the paucity of information available for all sectors was recognized by the Working Group. The Working Group therefore supports intensifying data collection efforts in this region.

Finally, NMFS should continue to report recreational BAYS landings as provisional to SCRS, and these data should not be used for future allocation purposes. If appropriate, a scientific paper should be developed utilizing the information from the Loftus/Stone report and presented to the SCRS in 2003. In addition, the United States should notify the SCRS at its 2003 assessment meetings for yellowfin and albacore of the potential for significant change to catch data for these species. Efforts should be made by NMFS to develop revised catch data for all BAYS tuna species in advance of the 2003 SCRS plenary meeting.

B. Research

The Working Group acknowledged and commended NMFS for producing a report of research projects on HMS species. The Working Group requested that this report continue to be updated annually and provided to the Advisory Committee at its spring meeting.



### C. Management

1) The United States should pursue international rebuilding programs for all overfished BAYS tuna stocks, in particular northern albacore and bigeye, considering their domestic importance. Given the nature of the U.S. fisheries for BAYS tunas, the United States should only be responsible for a proportional share of the burden associated with rebuilding. In addition, the current ICCAT limit on the U.S. northern albacore fishery does not adequately cover U.S. needs and flexibility of the relevant provisions should be sought at the 2003 ICCAT meeting. Regarding allocation issues, the working group recommended that the allocation criteria adopted by ICCAT not be applied in a formulaic manner.

2) The United States should ensure that nations harvesting bigeye and yellowfin tunas comply with ICCAT's 1997 recommendation to improve compliance with minimum size recommendations and take steps to accelerate the implementation of existing measures to reduce the harvest of these tunas that are less than the minimum size, including implementing the provisions of the minimum size compliance measure.

3) Recognizing that the Gulf of Guinea is an important area for recruitment in the BAYS tunas fisheries and that this area is where the vast majority of undersized bigeye and yellowfin tunas are harvested, the United States should:

(A) support ICCAT efforts to investigate the Gulf of Guinea fisheries and develop effective measures to reduce the mortality of sublegal fish harvested in this area. In this regard, the United States should explore the following as possible ways forward: (1) ask SCRS to evaluate the potential impacts associated with increasing net mesh sizes and other gear modifications in the purse seine fishery; (2) establish small fish quotas, possibly including the development of a schedule of reductions that would minimize negative economic impacts of the fleets; (3) requiring canneries that provide a market for undersized yellowfin and bigeye tuna to stop accepting these fish. Regarding item 1 above, the Working Group considered that it may be useful to provide assistance (monetary or otherwise) to artisanal fleets to facilitate implementation of the gear modifications.

(B) continue to support the use of international time/area closures in the Gulf of Guinea and, as appropriate, propose an increase in the temporal and spacial coverage of the current closure and an increase in observer coverage to 100% throughout the fishing season. In addition, expanding the closure to all gear types and/or establishing an absolute ban on fishing in the Gulf of Guinea during the closed period should be considered.

4) The United States is encouraged to provide technical support/assistance to developing states to assist in the development of effective fishery management practices, including data collection and reporting, in order to facilitate the full participation of these countries in ICCAT and their adherence to ICCAT's conservation and management measures. In this regard, the Working Group noted support for the assistance provided to Ghana by the United States in 2003 to ensure observer coverage in the Gulf of Guinea during the closed season and recommended such assistance be continued as necessary in the future.

## **II. Recommendations for Other Species:**

### *A. Dolphin and Wahoo*

As previously recommended, the United States should urge ICCAT to improve the collection of Task I data for wahoo and to begin collecting Task 1 data for dolphin fish, so that databases for these species can be established or improved. The Working Group takes note of the upcoming data workshop in October 2003 and notes that this issue may be appropriate for discussion at that meeting.

## **III. Other Issues:**

### *Monitoring*

The Working Group recognizes the ongoing work of ICCAT's Working Group to Develop Integrated Monitoring and Control Measures and recommends that the Committee consider holding a workshop, perhaps in 2004, to discuss at-sea data collection methods (e.g., observers, VMS, electronic logbooks) with a view to providing advice to the Commissioners on these issues in support of future ICCAT meetings on these topics.

### *BAYS Tunas Working Group Members*

Pamela Basco (technical advisor - absent due to temporary switch to Billfish WG)  
Ray Bogan  
Viridin Brown (Convener)  
John Dean (absent)  
Willie Etheridge (absent)  
John Larson (Technical Advisor)  
Liz Lauck (absent)  
Bob McAuliffe (Technical Advisor)  
Bob Pride (temporary member - switched from SWO WG)  
Randi Thomas  
Greg Skomal (Technical Advisor)

### *Other Attendees*

Kim Blankenbeker (NMFS Rapporteur)  
Joe Desfosse (NMFS HMS)  
John Graves (AC Chairman)  
Bill Hogarth (NMFS Director)  
Andy Loftus (NMFS Contractor)  
Chris Rogers (NMFS, Chief, HMS Division)  
Jerry Scott (NMFS SEFSC)  
Dick Stone (NMFS Contractor)  
Deirdre Warner-Kramer (State Department)  
Dorothy Zbiczy (State Department)

## **Report of the Billfish Working Group**

Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section to ICCAT  
2003 Species Working Group Workshop

Hilton Silver Spring  
April 30 - May 1, 2003

*Maumus Claverie, Convener*  
*David Kerstetter, Rapporteur*

The Billfish Working Group briefly discussed the results of the 2002 ICCAT annual meeting in Bilbao, Spain. However, the primary discussion by the group considered future actions by ICCAT with regards to billfish. Concerned about the assessment in 2005, and Endangered Species Act listing review in 2007 for white marlin, the group strongly expressed the need for continuation of directed billfish research by the United States.

### A. Research Recommendations

The Billfish Working Group reviewed the research priority list from 2002. This list included:

- 1) Continue efforts to describe the post-release survival of white marlin and blue marlin caught by commercial longline and recreational fishing gear.*
- 2) Identify habitat preferences of white marlin and blue marlin.*
- 3) Continue evaluation and testing of the assumptions inherent in the habitat standardization model.*
- 4) Develop a more generalized surplus production model that would accommodate the effect of age structure with catch and effort data.*
- 5) Continue research into methodologies to minimize billfish encounters and mortality in each targeted fishery that catches billfish.*
- 6) Continue work identifying basic billfish biological parameters.*

Research during 2002 into each of these six areas was reviewed by working group participants Gerry Scott, John Graves, Robert Cowen, and Ellen Peel. The Billfish Working Group commended the level of on-going research by NMFS and other researchers, and suggested that the various research programs coordinate the compatibility of data utilizing the same types of technology, such as pop-up satellite archival tags and hook timers on longline sets. In addition to strongly encouraging the continuation of the six research priorities listed in 2002, the group recommends that NMFS facilitate, including hosting meetings and travel assistance, coordination among researchers investigating billfish to synthesize their data across regions and technologies to increase the statistical power of the results.

Finally, noting both the management need in the next few years for additional data on billfish, and the fragmented nature of scientific funding in the current fiscal climate, the working group

also recommends the specific designation of a large programmatic funding source for billfish research as identified in the NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center Atlantic billfish research plan.

### B. Management Recommendations

The Working Group also expressed concern about the quality of the data to be used in the 2005 marlin stock assessment, given the mandatory reductions in international longline landings. Dr. Scott commented that this would increase the importance of non-foreign longline abundance indicators and noted that the SCRS was attempting to prepare for this assessment through two separate data workshops. He further reported that Japan and the European Community were both making efforts to provide better catch estimates to ICCAT.

The following two areas were identified as management priorities:

- 1) *Promote compliance with existing ICCAT management measures, especially those concerning observer coverage and data reporting requirements relevant to catch reductions.*
- 2) *Task the SCRS to undertake analyses of billfish releases by time, area, and by country or entity, including information on the condition of the fish at time of haulback.*

### Billfish Working Group Members

Maumus Claverie (Convener)  
Pamela Basco (technical advisor - temporary switch from BAYS WG)  
Robert Cowen (technical advisor)  
Jack Devnew  
John Graves  
Phil Goodyear (technical advisor - absent)  
Ron Hamlin (technical advisor - absent)  
Robert Lucas  
Don Nehls (technical advisor)  
Russ Nelson (absent)  
Ellen Peel  
Bob Zales (technical advisor - temporary switch from SWO WG)

### Other Attendees

Robert Hayes (U.S. Commissioner)  
David Kerstetter (VIMS, Rapporteur)  
Gerry Scott (NMFS SEFSC)  
Dorothy Zbicz (State Department)  
Shana Beemer (SWO WG member)

## **Report of the Swordfish Working Group**

Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section to ICCAT  
2003 Species Working Group Workshop

Hilton Hotel Silver Spring  
April 30 - May 1, 2003

*Gail Johnson, Convenor*  
*Rick Pearson, Rapporteur*

### **A. Research & Monitoring Recommendations**

1. **U.S. Reporting.** The working group appreciates the efforts of NMFS to improve the quality of U.S. swordfish catch data submitted to ICCAT and we hope these efforts continue. With the new permitting and reporting requirements, NMFS should provide an estimate of the universe of HMS anglers and the landings of recreationally-caught swordfish. We appreciate NMFS' efforts for outreach and urge them to continue.
2. **Observer Coverage.** NMFS may have reached up to 8% observer coverage on commercial longline vessels. The working group recommends evaluation of basing the level observer coverage by number of hooks set instead of number of sets, as long as the percent coverage by region is consistent.
3. **International Observer Coverage.** The US should continue to request updates and reviews on compliance of all nations with observer requirements and an IAC review of the quantity & quality of observer program data. submitted by each country to SCRS.
4. **Stock Structure.** The US should pursue an appropriate level of genetic sampling on swordfish to better define the north/south Atlantic stock boundary for use in the 2004 stock structure intercessional workshop.
5. **Bycatch Mortality.** The working group supports the development of research programs to determine survival rates of released swordfish from all gear types using pop-up tags or other appropriate methodology.
6. **Gear modification research.** The working group encourages research for the development of additional gear modifications to reduce bycatch and bycatch mortality with emphasis on methods that are exportable.
7. **Vessel Tracking.** The United States should encourage countries to comply with ICCAT VMS recommendation.

8. **Time/Area Closures.** The working group believes international time/area closures should be aggressively pursued. The US should update the evaluation of the US closed areas and request ICCAT approval to move forward and revise the minimum size regulations for US flag vessels fishing outside the closed areas.
9. **Data Needs.** The US should restart and, if possible, reconstruct the young of the year index to monitor juvenile swordfish abundance, which was compromised by the 1991 implementation of the minimum size.

## **B. Conservation and Management Recommendations**

1. **Rebuilding Plan.** The United States should monitor and evaluate the condition of the stock, the biomass and stock structure to ensure that the integrity of the swordfish rebuilding program is maintained, and that the target of the rebuilding program is achieved by 2008, especially given the recent increase in TAC.
2. **Allocation.** The United States should aggressively defend its allocated shares for swordfish, and all species. The US should seek full utilization of its ICCAT swordfish allocations, consistent with ICCAT recommendations and resolutions, Magnuson, and all other applicable laws.
3. **Reduce Undersized Swordfish Mortality.** The United States should work with other countries to identify areas of high catch of undersized swordfish, marlin and other highly migratory species. SCRS should schedule an intercessional meeting to complete identification of hotspots where specific time and area closures may be appropriate, and agree upon data needs and methodology. The working group also encourages the transfer of positive findings from longline gear modification research to foreign fleets.
4. **Combating IUU.** The United States must implement ICCAT's IUU measures as quickly as possible and coordinate with other major marketing nations as practicable in order to prevent negative "dumping" effects. The US should continue to pursue additional, more effective strategies that support multi-lateral authority to implement relevant unilateral measures including trade restrictive measures against Parties that do not comply with ICCAT management measures.

## **C. Other Issues**

1. **SEFSC Report.** The working group requests the SEFSC to prepare a brief overview report to IAC for future spring meetings, with the following information:
  - Summary of most recent stock assessment
  - Status relative to rebuilding benchmarks
  - Status of time/area closures and impacts on stocks/fishery
  - Status and effectiveness of minimum size compliance
  - International closed areas analysis
  - Pertinent research results from NMFS and academic science
  - Bycatch estimates [from all US swordfish fisheries]

### **Swordfish Working Group Members**

Shana Beemer  
Nelson Beideman  
Dave Borden (absent)  
Peter Foley (absent)  
Tim Hobbs (technical advisor)  
Gail Johnson (Convenor)  
Putnam MacLean (technical advisor - absent)  
Ernie Panacek (technical advisor - absent)  
Bob Zales (technical advisor - temporary switch to Billfish WG)  
Bob Pride (temporary switch to BAYS WG)

### **Other Attendees**

Rick Pearson (NMFS - Rapporteur)  
Glenn Delaney (Commercial Commissioner)  
Bill Hogarth (AA for Fisheries)  
Gerry Scott (NMFS SEFSC)  
Deirdre Warner-Kramer (State Department)

## **Report of the Bluefin Tuna Working Group**

Advisory Committee to the U.S. Section to ICCAT  
2003 Species Working Group Workshop

Hilton Hotel – Silver Spring  
April 30 – May 1, 2003

*David Secor, Convener*  
*Erika Carlsen, Rapporteur*

### A. Research Recommendations

1. **Central Atlantic Research.** Questions remain on the ecological determinants of aggregations of adult bluefin tuna, which occur in the Central Atlantic during spawning months. The Working Group requests that NMFS scientists work with other scientists and the U.S. longline fleet to develop procedures for collecting data on the biological attributes (reproductive biology, spatial distribution, size and age structure, stock origin) of adults captured during summer months.
2. **Stock Structure Research.** The Working Group recommends continued support by NMFS and ICCAT for ongoing efforts using otolith microconstituents and genetics. We encourage the Advisory Committee to assist in identifying opportunities for collecting young-of-the-year and 1-year bluefin tuna. Contact persons are D. Secor (410-326-7421; secor@cbl.umces.edu) and J. Graves (graves@vims.edu).
3. **Tagging Efforts.** The Working Group strongly recommends continued NMFS and international research support for conventional and electronic tagging to identify migration patterns and exchange rates across the Atlantic Ocean. We ask that NMFS encourage ICCAT to forge partnerships with other international organizations such as ICES to develop and coordinate electronic tagging in the Mediterranean and North Atlantic.
4. **Gulf of Mexico Spawning Stock Research.** Due to uncertainty in the status of the Gulf of Mexico spawning stock, the working group suggests research, monitoring, and further analysis of catch data to evaluate trends in abundance, demographic attributes, reproductive condition, and spawning potential of adult bluefin tuna in the Gulf of Mexico and Florida Straits. Beyond encouraging more basic research on these topics, we also recommend that SCRS develop a more intensive observer program to monitor bluefin tuna bycatch in U.S. and Mexican yellowfin tuna fisheries. We ask that NMFS to explore methods to reduce bycatch of bluefin tuna in the yellowfin tuna fishery through gear modifications, time-area closures, or other regulations. In recognition of Mexico's new quota for bluefin tuna caught as bycatch in their yellowfin tuna fishery, we request



that the U.S. delegation seek a recommendation that urges Mexican participation in research and monitoring, particularly with the use of at-sea observers.

5. **Research and Data Distribution.** The Working Group commends HMS efforts to distribute research projects and findings through an expanded website (<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hmshpg.html>). Still, navigation throughout the site is cumbersome, and we encourage further development of this website with more easily and expanded portals to the ICCAT monitoring and research pages and other related websites. Activities of the ICCAT Advisory Committee should also be summarized and recorded on the expanded HMS website.

## B. Management Recommendations

1. **Monitoring of Tuna Farming/NEI Catch.** The group is not confident that the 2003 ICCAT recommendation on tracking bluefin tuna farming activities is adequate to close potential loopholes for countries to obscure exceeded quotas of wild fish. The group perceives the need for much more detailed monitoring and accounting processes as the fish are transferred from tow cages to holding pens. The U.S. position should be that a reliable, verifiable method to track the amount of harvest going into the farms, accurate measuring of added weight due to growth in captivity and a process for reconciling farm production with exports, domestic marketing and national quotas must be determined.
2. **Expanding ICCAT Membership.** The Working Group noted that the increased membership of ICCAT, stemming largely from the adoption of allocation criteria, and the expansion of HMS fisheries in developing coastal states, will put additional stress on overfished or rebuilding stocks of highly migratory fishes, including western bluefin tuna. We request that NMFS/Commerce Department and the State Department develop a strategy to abate or mitigate against the likelihood of increases in TACs to accommodate new members. The Group urges that NOAA be prepared on the basis of the new criteria to take stands against frivolous requests for participation or excessive levels of quota.
3. **Development of Operational Model for Management.** The Working Group endorses a proposal by NMFS scientists to develop an "Operational Assessment Model" that allows managers and interested parties within SCRS to make better-informed policy decisions. The common access model will permit risks and benefits to be weighed against alternate decision-making structures. The Group expects that this effort will build upon, among other considerations, the alternative stock structures examined during the 2001 Mixing Workshop and the report from that workshop that was submitted to the Commission. The Operational Model will be presented to a group of scientists, managers and resource users in the days immediately prior to the 2003 SCRS Meeting. Because of the diverse issues entailed in the development and application of this model, participants of this workshop should include scientific experts, managers, and user groups.
4. **Achieve Sustainable Levels of Fishing in East Atlantic.** The Group congratulates the U.S. Commissioners and the U.S. Delegation for the overall remarkable results from the 2002 meeting across the wide spectrum of critical issues before the Commission. The

Group specifically recognizes the difficulties involved with eastern Atlantic bluefin TAC and sharing arrangement. The Group, however, remains seriously concerned about the recommendation establishing a 4 year TAC program allowing annual catches of at least 6,000 mt above the scientific recommendation. The Group is also concerned that a primary justification for the excessive TAC is an SCRS finding that catches beyond 50,000 mt might be sustainable if a large reduction in mortality on small fish is achieved. The Group notes that the recommendation is speculative and explicitly linked to a substantial, and to date unrealized reduction in the catch and landing of fish below 6.4 kg, (the ICCAT minimum size since 1974). We urge the Committee to recommend to U.S. SCRS scientists that there be an intensified focus (at SCRS meetings) on the small fish matter and to require immediate small fish mortality reductions that provide support for catch levels above current SCRS TAC advice for eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna. The results of such analysis should be packaged as specific advice to the Commission at the earliest opportunity.

5. **Allocation of Small Bluefin in the West Atlantic.** We reiterate our request to NMFS in 2002 to evaluate possible ways to increase the 8% cap by shifting mortality from larger school bluefin to smaller bluefin tuna in a manner that is resource-neutral. Recognizing that concern must be given to maintaining levels of juvenile mortality at acceptable levels, the U.S. Delegation should consider seeking an increase in the cap as part of any renegotiation of the 20-year rebuilding program.

#### Bluefin Tuna Working Group Members

Jim Budi (technical advisor)  
Andy Baler (technical advisor)  
Jim Donofrio  
Mike Genovese  
Molly Lutcavage (technical advisor - absent)  
Rich Ruais  
David Secor (Convener)  
Dick Stone (technical advisor)  
Steve Weiner (absent)  
Peter Weiss  
Dave Wilmot

#### Other Participants

Erika Carlsen (Rapporteur)  
Deirdre Warner-Kramer (State)  
Jerry Scott (SEFSC)  
Mike Sissenwine (NMFS HQ)